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Friday, March 9, 2018



TODAY'S EDITORIAL

Legislative efforts to give GOP upper hand only gain election confusion

CBC Editorial: Friday, March 9, 2018; Editorial # 8278
The following is the opinion of Capitol Broadcasting Company

In another of the seemingly unending efforts to impose solutions without problems, the leaders of the General Assembly have managed to [inject more confusion into North Carolina's election process](#). This comes at a time when legislators should be working even harder to assure all qualified voters will be able to cast ballots and those ballots will be properly counted.

The continuing efforts by the Republican leadership to push a heavy thumb on the elections process -- through significant changes in the way the state Board of Elections was composed -- were rushed into law. There was no investigation as to the need for the changes or how they'd make the elections process work better for voters or candidates. The only justifications were it would enshrine Republican Party domination of the election process and they had the votes to do it.

Gov. Roy Cooper, a Democrat, has rightly challenged the law. Even setting aside any legitimate questions as to the very need for the changes, there are significant questions as to whether the legislature acted within its authority and if the laws are constitutional. The state's courts are the appropriate forum to address these very real issues.

The General Assembly, no matter what faction might control it, isn't omnipotent nor infallible. Given the legislature's less than stellar record in the court when challenged over the last few years, scrutiny is more than appropriate.

More to the point, the campaign season is underway. There is no fully functioning state board. Similarly, a quarter of the county elections boards are not able to fully function at a time when many important decisions need to be made – most basically the location of polling places and early voting hours.

Rather than working to fix a problem he helped create, state House Rules Committee Chairman, Rep. David Lewis, R-Harnett, complained in a letter to the governor, that he should drop his lawsuit and "allow House Bill 90 to take effect and work with the General Assembly to address any of your remaining concerns."

Here's a worthy course of action for Lewis and his fellow legislative leaders, if they truly care about the efficient and fair conduct of elections in North Carolina.

Repeal their changes, convene a bipartisan study commission – with members equally drawn from the two dominant political parties, as well as from the courts and legal community, elections officials and executive branch of government – to examine key issues and come up with recommendations for changes. Give such a commission time to do its work and a mandate that all its proceedings be conducted in public.

Similarly, with recommendations submitted to the legislature, the proposals could be openly examined and debated.

It is the legislature that has cast a cloud over the elections process in North Carolina.

Rather than stalling and engaging in a public relations campaign to deflect responsibility, it is the legislature's duty to correct the current situation so North Carolina voters know the elections will be open and their votes will be accurately counted.



TODAY, MARCH 9, 2018 -- A round up of opinion, commentary and analysis on:

Trouble with board of elections, rise in female political candidates, student activism, opioid crisis solutions, tariff consequences and more.

POLICY & POLITICS

[Board of elections chaos](#) (Fayetteville Observer) -- As much as we're encouraged by the robust turnout of candidates for this year's elections and the high voter interest, we're also deeply concerned about our lack of functional boards of elections on the state and local levels. If there's a dispute or a problem, there's nobody to solve it, short of appealing to a Superior Court judge. That could be a recipe for chaos.

[MATTHEW BURNS: Corrections officer assaulted at site of fatal prison attack](#) (WRAL-TV analysis) -- A correctional officer was assaulted at Pasquotank Correctional Institution, the site of an attempted jailbreak last fall that killed four prison workers. A spokesman for the state Department of Public Safety said no weapons were involved in the attack and the unidentified officer was being treated at an urgent care clinic for non-life-threatening injuries.

[JIM MORRILL: How Donald Trump is leading to a surge of female candidates in NC, nationally](#) (Charlotte Observer analysis) -- Nationwide the number of female congressional candidates alone "blows the numbers of previous years out of the water," said Jean Sinzdak, associate director of the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University. In North Carolina, hundreds of women are running for offices around the state. The 116 women running for the General Assembly make up nearly 27 percent of all candidates

[LAURA LESLIE: Consultant says incentives tell firms NC 'open for business'](#) (WRAL-TV analysis) -- A top consultant for companies looking for places to expand predicted Thursday that North Carolina's failed bid for a big auto plant early this year will have a silver lining.

[Public information is for everyone, not just media](#) (Wilmington Star-News) -- Next week, March 11-17, is "Sunshine Week," an annual focus on access to public information, sponsored by the American Society of News Editors, the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press and other groups. Newsfolk will be celebrating with speeches, seminars and other events stressing the importance of transparency in government.

[TED BUDD: The Northeast's Costly Tunnel Vision](#) (Wall Street Journal column) -- Why should taxpayers from other states fund a hugely expensive project in New York and New Jersey?

[#Metoo moment at legislature won't go away](#) (Greensboro News & Record) -- The General Assembly has its first high-profile #MeToo moment, and this one unfortunately appears as if it might linger for a while. State Rep. Duane Hall (D-Wake) has been charged by a Democratic campaign aide with making inappropriate sexual remarks to her, NC Policy Watch, a progressive news organization, reported this past week. Policy Watch also cited two witnesses who said he kissed two women without their consent.

EDUCATION

[N.C. teachers opposed to carrying guns in their classrooms](#) (Elon Poll) -- More than three-quarters of North Carolina public school teachers believe that allowing teachers to carry guns in school is a bad idea. The Elon Poll found that only a quarter of teachers would consider carrying a gun in school if allowed to do so.

[MATTHEW BURNS: Students organizing nationwide walkout over gun violence](#) (WRAL-TV analysis) -- Students across the Triangle and across the country are planning a walkout next week to protest gun violence at schools. The coordinated walkouts at 10 a.m. next Wednesday mark the one-month anniversary of the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla. At least two dozen schools in Wake, Durham, Cumberland, Orange, Chatham and Lee counties have said they are participating in the 17-minute walkout to honor the 17 victims of the Florida shooting.

[North Carolina board approves armed volunteers in schools](#) (AP news analysis) -- A North Carolina school board has approved a program which would allow armed volunteers to serve as school resource officers.

[JOHN BAILEY: NC teacher salary average breaks \\$50,000 mark; amount varies by county](#) (Hickory Daily Record) -- While North Carolina's average for teacher pay has finally broken \$50,000, according to a recent Department of Public Instruction report, it does vary from county to county. The overall base salary for teachers in the state is \$45,861, but the use of local supplements, which has an average of \$4,337, along with performance-based supplements, help to push the number to \$52,214, according to the report. In Catawba

[**LIZ BELL: Johnson announces \\$200 for each K-3 reading teacher**](#) (EdNC analysis) -- The state's 2017 Principal of the Year is planning to use the \$200 that will be given to each K-3 reading teacher in the state to restock book shelves that were left empty when teachers left his school, Hertford Grammar School. The funding was announced by Superintendent of Public Instruction Mark Johnson.

[**LAURA LESLIE: State money earmarked for books, literacy aids**](#) (WRAL-TV analysis) -- State Superintendent of Public Instruction Mark Johnson said Thursday that he's targeting \$4.8 million in state funds to help reading teachers in kindergarten through the third grade pay for supplies and books.

HEALTH

[**NAOMI PRIOLEAU: Guilford County Creates New Program To Battle Opioid Epidemic**](#) (WUNC-FM analysis) -- Guilford County and UNC-Greensboro have created a community-engaged response to the opioid problem. The program is called Guilford County Solution to the Opioid Problem, or GCSTOP for short. The comprehensive effort uses state funds to engage people in harm-reduction practices, distribute naloxone, and include evaluation and research.

[**State Employees to See Some Changes with the State Health Plan**](#) (N.C. Health News analysis) -- State Treasurer Dale Folwell, whose office manages the state health plan, is looking to change the way people interact with the plan in order to reduce costs. Can it work?

[**FERRL GUILLROY: Reflections on a children's health check-up**](#) (EdNC column) -- A profile of North Carolina's children – sobering and challenging – emerges from the Child Health Report Card 2018, compiled by the North Carolina Institute of Medicine and the NC Child advocacy organization. The report serves as a powerful reminder that good health varies by family income, that schools influence children's future health, and that healthy children do better in school.

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

[**SARAH RANKIN: Documents reveal immense outreach on Atlantic Coast Pipeline**](#) (AP news analysis) -- Civic leaders in town after town along the 600-mile (966-kilometer) route of a proposed natural gas project have posed for similar photographs, smiling and accepting poster-sized checks from the Atlantic Coast Pipeline. Dominion Energy says it's being a good neighbor by handing out \$2 million in grants of around \$5,000 to \$10,000 in communities affected by its joint venture with fellow energy giants Duke Energy and Southern Co. But critics say Dominion is buying support on the cheap to outflank opponents of the project, which would carry fracked natural gas from West Virginia into Virginia, North Carolina, and potentially further south at a cost that's swelling to as much as \$6.5 billion.

[**JENNIFER ALLEN: DEQ's Regan Meets With Coastal Officials**](#) (Coastal Review analysis) -- Department of Environmental Quality Secretary Michael Regan met this week with elected officials in the region to discuss risks to the state's coastal economy and environment from offshore drilling and seismic

... AND MORE

[ADAM OWENS: NC craft beer industry to take big hit from Trump's steel, aluminum tariff](#) (WRAL-TV analysis) -- President Donald Trump has ordered steep new tariffs on steel and aluminum, a move some local breweries fear could impact their bottom lines.

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